



SHOW: Hardball with Chris Matthews (9:00 PM ET) - CNBC

May 8, 2002 Wednesday

LENGTH: 1952 words

HEADLINE: **Hasan Abdel Rahman**, Palestinian chief rep. to US, and Israeli Consul General Alon Pinkas debate whether Arafat can bring peace

ANCHORS: CHRIS MATTHEWS

BODY:

CHRIS MATTHEWS, host:

Welcome back to HARDBALL. This half-hour, former George magazine editor Rich Blow with his profile of the late John F. Kennedy Jr.

But first the HARDBALL DEBATE tonight: Ariel Sharon's next move. Should Israel dismantle Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority? Sharon used some of the toughest language of his life we've heard as he responded to yesterday's suicide bombing.

Mr. ARIEL SHARON (Israeli Prime Minister): The attacks continues and will continue until all those who believe that they can make gains through the use of terror will cease to exist, will cease to exist. He who rises up to kill us, we will pre-empt it and kill him first. As we have proven, there is no and there never will be any shelter for terrorists, their abettors or dispatchers and all those who are engaged in terrorism. There is no and there never will be any shelter for evil.

MATTHEWS: Sharon also vowed that Israel will fight for the values of freedom, liberty and democracy. Here's more.

Mr. SHARON: Israel will fight anyone who tries to threaten these values. Israel will fight anyone who tries sui--suicide terrorism to solve fear. Israel will fight. Israel will triumph and when victory prevails, Israel will make peace.

MATTHEWS: Alon Pinkas is Israel's consul general up in New York and **Hasan Abdel Rahman** is the chief Palestinian representative in the United States.

Mr. Rahman, I have to ask you: What was your reaction when you heard of yesterday's attack in Tel Aviv? More people killed. Fifteen more people killed.

Mr. **HASAN ABDEL RAHMAN** (Palestinian Chief Representative to United States): I was saddened and I was appalled by it. I didn't like it.

Page 209

CNBC News Transcripts May 8, 2002 Wednesday

MATTHEWS: When you heard that Hamas had taken credit for it, what was your reaction?

Mr. RAHMAN: Whoever, Hamas or non-Hamas. You know, I've said it once and over again, we are--and I'm personally--opposed to killing civilians, whether they are Palestinians or Israelis. Killing civilians is immoral, it is illegal and the fact that it is done by Palestinians doesn't make it right and the fact that it is made by the Israelis, it is not right.

MATTHEWS: Why doesn't your leader, Yasser Arafat, say that to the families of the person who commits these atrocities and say, 'You'll have to leave Palestine now because any family that's responsible for one of these killings has to go.' Wouldn't that send a signal to all these so-called martyrs, that if they do this again, their family has to leave the region?

Mr. RAHMAN: Chris...

MATTHEWS: Why doesn't he do that?

Mr. RAHMAN: Listen, if you want everyone who killed a civilian to leave that region, that region will be left without any people because there are so many...

MATTHEWS: Well, at least it would be a strong statement.

Mr. RAHMAN: No, we--it isn't a strong statement. You don't impose collective punishment on anybody. We have, as I said, people who are engaged in acts of violence that we disapprove of. But, you cannot look at this...

MATTHEWS: Why do you give collective benefits to families of people who commit suicide to kill other people? You've got lots of Arabs in the region giving money to families as a reward for their kid having killed 20 or so Israelis. That's--that's collective benefit.

Mr. RAHMAN: It is not.

MATTHEWS: What is it?

Mr. RAHMAN: It is not a collective benefit. We will have a family that is unemployed, without income, do you put them to starve? Listen, and you have--you cannot look at this independent form--the conditions under which those people live. I am--I know what you're going to say but listen to me, it is important what I want to do. What Israelis are doing to the Palestinian people generates violence. That's what President Bush said yesterday to Sharon in his eyes. He told him, 'Listen, hopelessness makes suicide bombers.'

MATTHEWS: I understand that.

Mr. RAHMAN: That's what he said--that--and what Sharon is doing to the Palestinians creates suicide bombers.

MATTHEWS: And--and these suicide bombings have destroyed the Israeli political middle so that your cause has no support in Israel now. That's what you've accomplished.

Page 210

CNBC News Transcripts May 8, 2002 Wednesday

Mr. RAHMAN: But, you know, revenge generates revenge. If the Israelis...

MATTHEWS: Let me--I know that these suicides have killed the chance for peace. Let me go--let me go...

Mr. RAHMAN: Are you telling me that--that Israelis killing Palestinians is kosher?

MATTHEWS: I did not defend it. Let me--let me go to Mr...

Mr. RAHMAN: Well, OK. So condemn it.

MATTHEWS: Ambassador--Mr. Ambassador, let me ask you this: What are the options on the table for your government now after this latest atrocity near--near Tel Aviv? What are the options in terms of dealing with or getting rid of, in effect, Yasser Arafat?

Mr. ALON PINKAS (Israeli Consul General): Well, getting rid of Mr. Arafat is not going to solve anything. Changing and profoundly transforming the Palestinian authority or whatever is left of it, whatever these group of corrupt politicians left of it is--is a different story. And we think that through reform, true--through transparency, hopefully new leadership will emerge that is not as corrupt, undemocratic...

MATTHEWS: OK. What about--excuse me, I've got to move forward--but what about Mr.--Mr. Ambassador, the idea that was breached by the--the Prime Minister Sharon the other day to several newspaper reporters from this country--you've obviously read it--that he would like to treat Arafat as almost like an Emeritus figure, as sort of a grand old man, an eminence grise, as we say in law firms here, put him aside, treat him like he's still sort of there but begin to negotiate with somebody else, a prime minister, anybody that you can find as a negotiating partner besides Arafat? Is that Israeli policy now?

Mr. PINKAS: It's not Israeli policy it--but it's a damn good idea, because if--if we had a retirement plan for dictators, then we wouldn't have to deal with Arafat. He could go to--to Cuba, to Jamaica, to Italy, I don't care where, and retire. If he is the--the Emeritus CEO of the Palestinian cause and the

executive powers are given to people with which we could negotiate, people will believe in all those things that Arafat and Mr. Rahman and the other lieutenants don't believe: life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, due diligence, supremacy of law, democracy, civil rights, elections, all these alien concepts and terms, then we can reach peace, because--because a political process and a peace process is imperative. There's no other way here.

MATTHEWS: Let me ask you about this--about Yasser Arafat one more time. What is the plan to deal with Yasser Arafat with your government right now?

Mr. PINKAS: I don't know, because I--I can't answer that definitively, Chris, because the cabinet meeting with--which dealt with the issue ended just a few hours ago. I think that the issue of Arafat is not an issue and I think it's also wrong to focus and concentrate on him as if he is the epitome or he is the--the problem itself.

MATTHEWS: The only reason I say that, Mr. Ambassador, is just a moment ago we
Page 211

CNBC News Transcripts May 8, 2002 Wednesday

saw some tape of Prime Minister Sharon in the strongest language we've heard in a long time saying he's going to make that entity cease to exist. Now, what's he talking about when he talks about people ceasing to exist?

Mr. PINKAS: I think he's talking about the entity that--that breeds terrorism, the entity that--that makes violence happen, the entity that calls for shaheeds to march on Jerusalem.

MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. PINKAS: The entity that produces hatred, incitement and--and homicide bombers.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, I I think it's on the table--I think it's on the table for your government to try to eliminate the leadership of the PLO, the PLO and the PA.

Mr. PINKAS: Oh, poli--you're right. Politically we do.

MATTHEWS: And, let me ask you--let me ask Mr. Rahman. It seems to me that you have a problem in your leadership. Your government--but the most sympathetic pro-Pale--PLO person in this country would say, 'Arafat's problem is that he probably represents a majority of Palestinians, in fact, he's the most popular figure in the country. But a good chunk of the country is violent and they're separate from him in their political purposes and their purposes are to destroy Israel,' and that's Hamas and Jihad and others. How can your--your leader claim to be true leader of your country when he can't control such a large renegade block of people like Hamas who took credit for what happened yesterday?

Mr. RAHMAN: But I wish first to allow...

MATTHEWS: Does he take--does he claim to be leader to them?

Mr. RAHMAN: I wish--I wish first you allow me to respond to some of the distortions that were made and interruptedly by Mr. Pinkas, such as that Israel pursues happiness life while it is making the Palestinian people unhappy, that is destroying the Palestinian peoples' lives, that is making democracy for the Palestinians impossible and that is stealing Palestinian land and Palestinian livelihood. That what--is, I call, the infrastructure of terrorism. Occupation is the infrastructure of terrorism, and if Mr. Pinkas and his government are true to what they preach, they have to dismantle the occupation...

MATTHEWS: OK. OK.

Mr. RAHMAN: ...otherwise we will have violent because occupation is the systematic violence and a system of violence.

MATTHEWS: I have a feeling we're going to have violence no matter what you say, Mr. Rahman, because I don't think your leader controls Hamas or Jihad and

you know that.

Mr. RAHMAN: In Ga--but let me tell you, Yasser Arafat is the leader of the Palestinian people. His function is to achieve liberty and freedom for his people...

Page 212
CNBC News Transcripts May 8, 2002 Wednesday

people...
MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. RAHMAN: ...and not to become a policeman for Israel.

MATTHEWS: Not to police his own people?

Mr. RAHMAN: Not the policeman for Israel. He is in charge of the security for the Palestinian people and not for Israel...

MATTHEWS: OK.

Mr. RAHMAN: ...because Israel is behaving like a terrorist state.

MATTHEWS: I got you. You're being very clever. It's not his job to stop terrorism, in other words?

Mr. RAHMAN: No. But he is--we are engaged in the Saudi defense against the terror of Israel.

MATTHEWS: But it's not his job to stop Palestinian terrorism against Israel?

Mr. RAHMAN: Do you consi--do you consider occupation an act of terror or not?

MATTHEWS: I am--I am completely against occupation but you've just said it's not Arafat's job to stop violence.

Mr. RAHMAN: No. No, no. I said...

MATTHEWS: OK. We've got to go. We got to go.

Last thought. Last word, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. PINKAS: Look, I--I think there is treatment for lost political cases like Mr. Rahman who live in denial for 55 years now. Assume responsibility for your own fate. You never showed up at Camp David, you scream all day, 'Lies and distortions!'

Mr. RAHMAN: He is lying about this. He lies every time...(unintelligible)...

MATTHEWS: OK. I think we left of--please, I respect your government, but this is really--we have to draw the line here.

Mr. RAHMAN: You weren't at Camp David, Mr. Pinkas. I was at Camp David. I was. You were not.

MATTHEWS: We are out of time. Mr. Ambassador, thank you. Mr. Rahman, thank you.

Up next, the POLITICAL BUZZ here at home. Tonight, a close-up look at one of the great figures of our time in terms of iconic value, John F. Kennedy, Jr. Former George magazine editor Richard Blow has a new book out. He's going to join us to talk about his book about that fellow right there, John F. Kennedy

Page 213

CNBC News Transcripts May 8, 2002 Wednesday

Jr. Back with HARDBALL.

(Announcements)

LOAD-DATE: May 9, 2002